

# Teaching Guide to *Shortcuts* by Jeff Harris

## Introduction

*Shortcuts* by Jeff Harris is a beautifully illustrated, fact-packed page that makes learning fun. Each week, *Shortcuts'* multicultural cast (Juanita, K., Roland, Junior and James) offers facts, riddles, jokes and puzzles to help kids learn about science, geography, animals, food, history and holidays.

Each teaching guide provides ideas for expanding the lesson and creating discussion and learning activities for your students. The grade level for the guides is usually 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>, but they can be adapted for use at other levels. The guides are broken down into four areas :

### **1. Questions for Discussion and Further Study**

Designed to help students think and research, not just give one-word answers

### **2. Activity Ideas**

Designed to allow students to be creative and teach themselves

### **3. Use the News**

Designed to have students use the news in studying each topic

### **4. Quick Quiz**

Designed to be adaptable to several grade levels, evaluate students' comprehension and build vocabulary and math skills

You might use the teaching guides in the following ways:

**Questions for Discussion and Further Study:** Engage the entire class by asking each question aloud and listing the students' answers on the board. Or have them use reference resources to give their own answers to the questions. Allow them to discuss other students' answers after they've researched the topics. Key words or phrases that can help students search for more information are italicized.

**Activity Ideas:** Give the students a time limit to research their projects, using library or study time. By having the students cite their resources you can check their work; or, alternatively, tell them which resource(s) you prefer them to use.

**Use the News:** These can be worked on individually but we suggest they work in groups to learn teamwork skills.

- **Quick Quiz:** We suggest you review the quizzes ahead of time and change the phrasing or difficulty level based on the students' abilities.

# **Shortcuts: TALKING ABOUT THE TRIASSIC PERIOD**

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**Objective:** After completing the exercises, students should have a better understanding of the Triassic Period.

**Subject Areas:** The following information about the Triassic Period will be discussed:

- What were the great extinctions?
- What was Pangaea?
- How did plants and animals change during the Triassic Period?

**Evaluation:** Students may be evaluated using the following point scale:

*Four points:* Information is accurate, organized, shows creative thought/use of materials

*Three points:* Information is accurate and organized

*Two points:* Information is mostly accurate; organization needs some work

*One point:* Significant inaccuracies; lacks organization

## **Topics for Discussion and Further Study**

1. What may have caused the great extinctions that occurred on the Earth over its history? Each time most of the life on Earth died out, but gradually regrew and evolved into new plants and animals. Could a new “great extinction” happen again?
2. Research a complete timeline of Earth's geologic eras.

## **Activity Ideas**

- During the Triassic Period, all the continents were joined together in a super-continent we call Pangaea. Why do scientists believe this theory? Check out this website to gain some insight about the clues to this theory. <http://library.thinkquest.org/17701/high/pangaea/>
- What was the difference between the animals and plants at the beginning of the Triassic compared to the end? What are some examples of the differences? Research and write a report comparing some of the changes you learn about.

### **Use the News**

- Use the word search words, or others you find in this comic to create your own crossword puzzle about the Triassic Period. You'll have to think about an appropriate definition or description to go with each of the words. Your puzzles can be drawn by hand or you can use an online puzzle maker such as this one: [http://www.puzzle-maker.com/crossword\\_Design.cgi](http://www.puzzle-maker.com/crossword_Design.cgi)

## **Answers to the Quiz**

1.) b, 2.) d, 3.) b, 4.) d, 5.) a, 6.) c , 7.) rocks, 8.) million, 9.) 10%, 10.) 48

# Quick Quiz — The Triassic Period

1. Huge dinosaurs lived during most of the Triassic Period.  
a. True b. False
2. The Mesozoic Era consisted of the Triassic, \_\_\_\_\_, and Cretaceous Periods.  
a. Biassic b. Fantastic c. Dinassic d. Jurassic
3. There were no mammals during the Triassic Period.  
a. True b. False
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ Era came just before the Mesozoic Era.  
a. Cretaceous b. Triassic c. Jurassic d. all of the above
5. The Triassic Period started and ended with a mass extinction of many of Earth's plants and animals.  
a. True b. False
6. \_\_\_\_\_ became the dominant species during the Triassic Period.  
a. Humans b. Insects c. Dinosaurs d. Mammals

## Vocabulary Comprehension

7. The Triassic is named after a formation of \_\_\_\_\_ that were discovered in Germany.
8. The Triassic Period began about 251 \_\_\_\_\_ years ago.

## Math Comprehension (subtraction, division, addition, fractions)

9. If the Permian Extinction killed about 90 % of life on Earth, what percent was left to repopulate the Earth?
10. If 6 dinosaurs laid 8 eggs each, how many eggs in total would there be?